

Gang leader slain over stealing 1 bag of cement

A dreadful gang led by one Okey Akubalu, Chairman of Iwoma Landlords Associations, Oyiabo, Rivers State, allegedly killed Mr. Brendan Ozoemena and cut off his genitals organ for stealing a bag of cement, writes our Correspondent **CHINEDU WOSU**, in Port Harcourt.

Below are excerpts:

THE family of Ozoemena in Ikeduru Local Government Area, Imo state would never forget Saturday, May 16, 2009, in a hurry. It was the day a dreaded militant group led by one Mr. Okey Akubalu, said to be the Chairman of Iwoma Landlord Association, Oyiabo in Rivers state allegedly killed their son, Mr. Brendan Ozoemena, a sand contractor and a petty business man. His genital organ was also cut-off, when the deceased demanded for his N17,400 debt from Mrs. Ndidi Ndukuba.

Ozoemena, a native of Ogada-Okwu in Ikeduru met his untimely death when one Mrs. Ndukuba gave him a contract to supply sand and wood for her building project and refused to pay the latter his money worth N17,400 after severally demands for the money.

The deceased, who until his

demise, resided at No.1 High Tension Road Iwoma Estate, Zone 4 with his wife, Cordelia, and children was allegedly, kidnapped by the militant gang following allegations by Madam Ndukuba that Ozoemena stole her bag of cement.

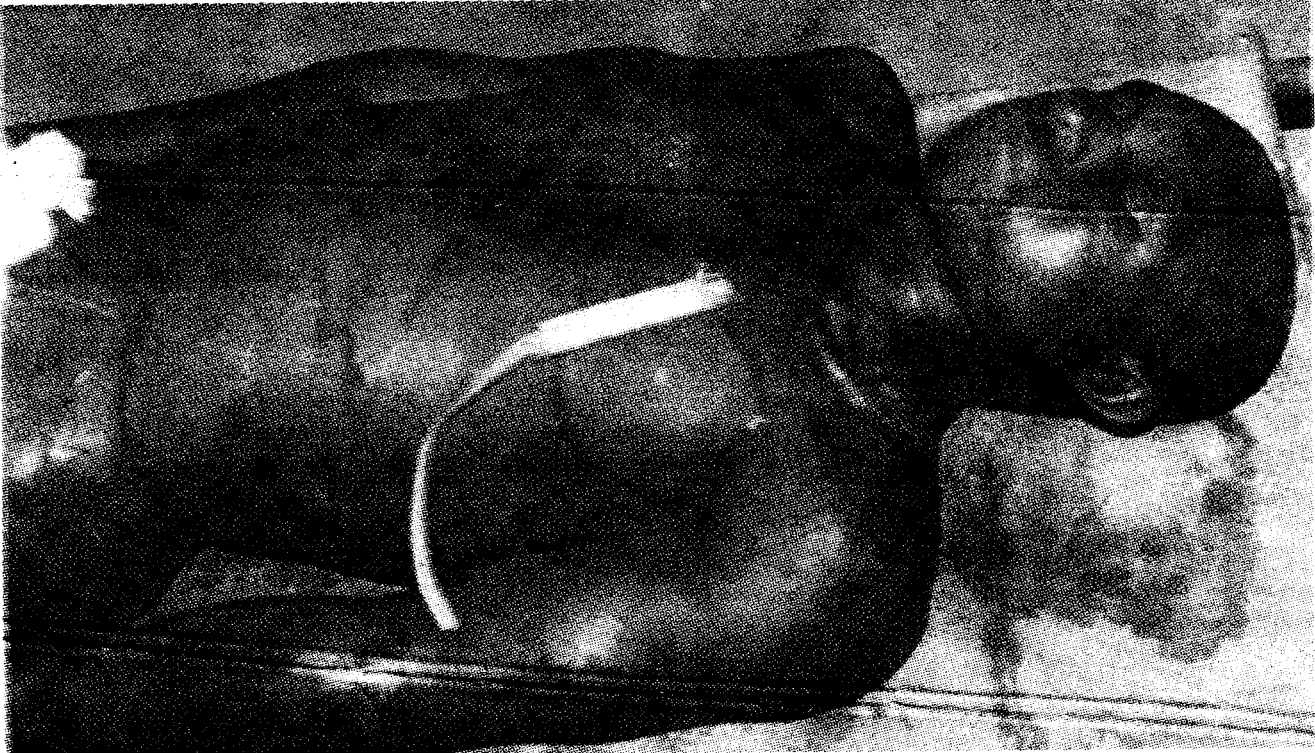
The group abducted the victim before his wife, who wailed uncontrollably and begged for his release. But he was whisked away to the Oyiabo camp, where he was later tried and killed and had his genital organs cut-off without questioning.

Hours later, wife of the deceased and daughter were ordered by the gang to go and carry the lifeless body of her husband, but she refused. It was learnt that they later dumped Ozoemena's corpse in his residence and drove off.

Describing the brutal murder of her husband to Daily Champion, Mrs. Ozoemena said prior to his death, Brendan was a struggling man, fighting to make ends meet through supplying sand to builders and estate developers in Oyiabo.

She disclosed that Mrs. Ndukuba gave him a contract to supply sand and after the supply she refused to pay him despite several pleas. She cooked up an allegation that he stole a bag of cement from the site to the dreaded killers before he was abducted and killed by the hired group.

Crying profusely as she continued the story, Cordelia said: "When they took my husband to their militant camp, they used knives and slaughtered him and cut-off his genital organ before the leader Okey Akubalu ordered



•Late Ozoemena.

me and my daughter to come and carry his corpse and boasted that he is very close to the Inspector of General (IG) of police and Assistant Inspector General (AIG) in charge of Zone Six, Calabar, Cross River state.

The gang also claimed they had contacts in the Presidency and across Oyiabo, insisting that their dreaded camp had the blessing of the state government and the state Commissioner of Police.

Anthony Ozoemena, senior brother of the deceased alleged that the gang set-up an arbitration camp in Oyiabo to arbitrary try, sentence and sometimes kill their victims over spurious charges.

He also alleged that the brother's wife was beaten and flogged with knives while the

daughter was assaulted by the terror gang before the brother was killed and his private part severed.

He insisted that the militant leader not, Okey Ozoemena a notorious criminal also owes a welding workshop, where local guns are fabricated and supplied to cult groups, criminals and imported to neighbouring communities for mayhem and communal crises.

Daily Champion learnt that the state police command had arrested Akubalu, the self-styled judge and leader of the bloody gang.

In a petition signed by the deceased family, a copy of which was made available to our correspondent, the family called on the state government and

police authorities to properly investigate the murder and dreaded group.

The statement said, the family believed "in the principle of rule of law and has hope on Governor Chibuike Amaechi-led administration to dig deep into the heinous crimes committed by the gang as the state government would not negotiate with the gang leader and his cohorts."

The family also said they had no confidence in the police authority in Oyiabo as the gang leader boasted of bribing the police in Zone Six and those close to the AIG and IG.

"We most sincerely call on the state government and the State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Bala Hassan to personally intervene in the matter. We want the full

weight of the law to descend heavily on the wicked and barbaric outlaws based in Oyiabo community".

Contacted on the incident, the command's Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Mrs. Innoma Rita Abbey said the police had arrested those responsible for the act.

"The police in Oyiabo have been directed to transfer the case file to the state Police Headquarters in the state," she added.

The command disclosed that the murder of Brenda Ozoemena had generated serious security reactions in the city, adding that the police are battle-ready to ward up criminals and militant groups in the state.